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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Lebanon, Syria/Jordan,  
Syria/Turkey (4/26)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers briefly reported President Asad's meeting with Serge Brammertz, Head of the UN Committee investigating the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. Brammertz also held a meeting with Vice President Al-Sharaa, which was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmed Arnous and Dr. Riyad Al-Daoodi, Legal Advisor of the Foreign Ministry.

Papers also quoted a Syrian Foreign Ministry source as denying a statement by a Jordanian government spokesman about the smuggling of arms to Jordan via Syria. The source said "the claim that a military leader of Hamas, residing in Syria, was behind the operation, is absolutely inaccurate, and Syria has no knowledge of such a thing." The source added, "all Hamas leaders present in Syria are political leaders simply doing political and media tasks; they are committed to the Syrian policy that does not allow launching any military activity from its territory."

Papers also reported the announcement by a Turkish economic official that the Turkish government would launch a new program to develop economic ties with Syria. Mohammed Jiraq, Chairman of Economic Ties and Technology in the Planning Institute of the Turkish government, stated that the program of cooperation between Syria and Turkey would be implemented within three years with USD 20 million in capital. "Work on this project started this year and will be finished in 2008 if agreement is reached between the two sides," Jiraq said, noting that the capital will be provided by the two governments.

Papers also reported that President Lahoud met in Lebanon with a delegation representing the Regional Command of the Al-Ba'th Party of Lebanon, headed by Regional Secretary of the Party Ghazi Seifuddin. President Lahoud said that "dialogue among the Lebanese parties is the only way to solve disputes and to foil American and Israeli schemes." He added that "Syria has offered Lebanon all kinds of support and assistance to maintain the national accord, end the civil war and advocate national resistance."

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad and Vice-President Shara confer with Serge Brammertz" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"A Foreign Ministry source denies weapons smuggling to Jordan through Syria. Involving Syria's name doesn't serve relations between Syria and Jordan. Hamas rejects Jordan's accusations: Baseless and false" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"Ankara: A program has been launched to promote economic cooperation with Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/26)

"Lebanese President Lahoud reiterates the importance of national unity among the Lebanese" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/26)

"US Secretary of State Rice: Iran is not Iraq; we prefer dialogue with it" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/26)

"Explosions in Dahab in Egypt: 10 suspects arrested. Most recent official death toll: 18" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/26)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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Syrian Support of Palestinians Is a Pan-Arab and Humanitarian Commitment  
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Dr. Sa'id Musallam, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/26): "The important meetings that Palestinian FM al-Zahhar recently held in Damascus produced outstanding results at

a time when the HAMAS-led Palestinian government is coming under growing international pressure....

"The unlimited Syrian support for Palestinians is not new.... What is more important in the Syrian message to the world is the need to respect the democratic option of the Palestinian people, not to punish them....

"Syria has decided to launch a popular fundraising campaign to help Palestinians, to upgrade diplomatic and humanitarian relations with the Palestinians, and to transfer the stranded Palestinians on the Iraqi-Jordanian border to Syria....

"Syria's growing support for Palestinians despite intensified international pressure, stems from firm Syrian beliefs and a principled Syrian position toward the Palestinian cause. It is a consolidation of Syria's pan-Arab convictions and inclinations, away from international equations that proceed from the American-Israeli decision...."

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"Big Dangers"  
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Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (4/26): "Palestinians must consolidate their national unity and unify their efforts to realize their objectives of ending the occupation and establishing their independent state.

"It is obvious that Israel is the only enemy for Palestinians. Regardless of the nature of the Palestinian government, this enemy is working to implement a hostile Zionist plan aimed at uprooting the Palestinian people and capturing more of their territory....

"Palestinians must close ranks and rally around the Palestinian government and the Palestinian Authority.... Only then they will be able to break the siege and liberate their occupied lands.... All Arab countries must support Palestinians at this stage...."

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## "Extracted Intentions and Worrying Questions"

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Ali Qasim, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/26): "Lebanese Prime Minister Fu'ad al-Saniora returned from the United States with an American intention to help Lebanon.... Large sectors of the Lebanese fear that this American intention would only pave the way for new chapters in the Lebanese tragedy...."

"These fears are legitimate.... The results of Al-Saniora's visit jeopardize the Lebanese national dialogue conference, especially since Al-Saniora tried to suggest that many of the issues that will be discussed on 28 April have already been settled on the American level...."

"What Al-Saniora did has resulted in his losing many of his political assets, especially as he tried to make himself a party to an equation that tries to take Lebanon to the other side...."

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## "Exposed Policy"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (4/26): "Criticism of the US Administration's foreign policies is on the rise in the United States...."

"The American taxpayer discovered -- perhaps too late -- that his administration has misled him, from the time it declared war on terror to its current actions in Iraq under the guise of spreading democracy and defending human rights.... What is more tragic is that instead of correcting its mistakes, the US Administration is making more....  
"We are not alone in criticizing American policy. Americans stand in the first trench in their rejection of their administration's policies, practices, and violations. It is enough for us that they stand with us in the same trench. What is important is that the American policy has been exposed."

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